a free Church in his diocese, subscribed five cents weekly through the envelope system of his parish, and donated a large sum yearly to the support of the opera in his native city. I am not saying that athletic fields and operatic performances do not offer desirable opportunities to the public. I am saying that in an age of princely giving and spending *the Church has to beg its bread!* That is, men are following wandering stars, and are making their offerings wherever their stars lead them. But it is our privilege and duty to show our people that our star is the Star of Bethlehem, that Christ is our Lord, that His Church is our Church, and that our gifts belong to Him.

The Church is the moral and spiritual power-house of civilization. If the power shall ever be cut off, Christlike activities will eventually come to a standstill all along the line. And because money is needed for the maintenance and upkeep and extension of the power-house, for fuel and material, for administration and labor, money is an essential part of the Christian life. And it is our high mission, both clergy and laity, to maintain and extend and man the power-house, and so to supply a moral and spiritual current to the World.

THE MONEY QUESTION

SERMON

BY

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SUBJECT

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"They presented unto Him gifts."

St. Matthew II:11 (part).

The Epiphany season and the Story of the Wise Men are inseparable. The Collect for the Epiphany dartles with star-light. The Epistle proclaims the Glad Tidings to the Gentile world. The Gospel is the story itself.

We all feel, I suppose, that there is nothing more beautiful in the New Testament than the visit of the Wise Men to the Holy Family. There is the Star. There is their arrival at Jerusalem, and their question —"Where is He that is born king of the Jews?" There is the troubled mind of Herod, and of Jerusalem with him. There is the council to decide the question of the birthplace. There is the crafty advice of the king, and the departure of the Wise Men to Bethlehem. There is the discovery of the young child with Mary His mother, and the great joy of the discovery. There is the Adoration. There is the offering of Gold, Frankin-

cense and Myrrh. There is the warning dream, and the return of the Wise Men to their own country by another way.

Every part of the story is suggestive. Its every phrase may well serve for a text. But, after all, what is its seed-thought? The Star is the symbol. The Wise Men are the actors. The Christ Child is the central figure. The scene is laid in Bethlehem. The Virgin Mother is the silent witness. And Herod casts a sinister shadow across the whole.

But what is the seed-thought of the story? Is it not that the Wise Men "presented unto Him gifts"? Is it not the offering of gold, frankincense and myrrh?

When I think back over my ministry (and we clergy have much the same experiences) two periods stand out in my mind pre-eminently conspicuous—the three years spent in the seminary and the two years spent in the army overseas. One stands to me for an ideal: the other, for the possibility of its realization.

In the seminary the student's mind is occupied, is it not? with Pastoral and Doctrinal theology, Christian Evidence, Church History, Liturgics, Sociology, the Missionary situation, the art of Preaching, with Greek and Hebrew, and with Textual and Higher Criticism. His spirit is refreshed with frequent and inspiring religious services. He is associated with learned and consecrated teachers. And his soul is filled with an ideal of the ministry. He is looking forward eagerly to a life in Holy Orders. He begins to picture himself as a pastor, sharing the hopes and fears of his people, ministering to the afflicted, com-

forting the sorrowful, encouraging the disheartened, and guiding, as far as he can, those who come to him for counsel. He begins to think of himself as a preacher of Church Doctrine and Bible Truth, and longs to apply the life of Christ to the questions of the day, and to bring every one with whom he comes in contact into touch with the Living Lord. He is also looking forward to his priesthood and its privileges and responsibilities and duties, blessing the congregation of the Faithful, shriving the penitent, administering sacraments ordained by Christ Himself as generally necessary to salvation, a death unto sin and a new birth unto righteousness, the strengthening and refreshing of souls.

Then saturated with this ideal of the ministry, he leaves the seminary, and becomes, perhaps, the rector of a small country parish! And with what awakening? With what result? In nine cases out of ten he finds himself face to face with a cold business proposition! And I tell you, although you do not need to be told, that it is only by the marvel of God's grace that his ideal is not shattered for ever on the spot! He finds that the money question is the most pressing question with which he has to deal. Whichever way he turns the call for money is dinned into his ears—not only for paying off the debt upon his little church, for repairs upon Church property, for choir and music, for alms, for parish societies and organizations, for community charities, for Diocesan assessments, for Missionary quotas and apportionments, but very probably also *for his own stipend!* And, I repeat, he is a

man of rare courage, if his soul withstands the shock of his surprise and awakening!

If the student begins his ministry as an assistant in a well organized city parish, where he has no financial responsibilities of a parochial nature, the money question escapes him for a time, and the awakening is slower and consequently less disturbing, but in the end he finds that it is inevitable. He discovers that what the late Bishop Greer used to say is true, that "it takes the same kind of a mind to run such a parish as St. Bartholomew's, New York City, as it does to run the New York Central Railroad"! He discovers, that is, that he has been launched into a business career, and that the President of a Railroad is not more concerned with administrative and financial schemes than is the rector of an average parish. And the discovery comes to him in some cases as a shattering blow.

The student leaves the seminary an idealist. He has visions of a life to be spent in preaching the Gospel (deluded man that he is!), in teaching the thoughts and words and works of Christ to the little ones of his flock, in the exercise of his priesthood with Prayer Book and Sacrament. He imagines himself the shepherd of souls, and even aspires to grow in grace and to follow closely in the footsteps of the Master. But he discovers that he is not so much a prophet, priest or pastor as a collector of revenue—that his glorious ideal has become a humdrum, if not a sordid reality, that his poetic vision has vanished before a prosaic fact!

That other period, to which I have referred, which

now seems so long ago, the two years with the soldiers overseas, seemed to me at the time to be the realization of the ideal of student days. The money question did not exist. The generous parish with which I am connected saw to it that it did not exist. Thousands of francs were sent to me unsolicited for the sick and wounded and needy. Every hour of every day and many an hour of every night (except those hours spent in censoring letters) were left free for the work of the ministry. Seven days a week over there one could be a prophet, priest and pastor. Daily celebrations of the Holy Communion and daily Evensong were easily possible. Every Sunday all day long one could conduct preaching services in Church Hut or Y. M. C. A. Hut or Salvation Army Hut or out of doors. Private Communions could be given daily. The sick and wounded could be ministered to without fail. Men could be prepared for baptism and, whenever a bishop was available, for Confirmation. There was always time for individual counsel and direction and absolution and benediction. And why? Because the money question did not exist! No collection was ever taken! I do not mean there were no offerings. There were always offerings and they were often generous. At the Church Hut door was fastened a little offering-box, and every week a simple announcement was made of the object for which the offerings would be used. Every one therefore had an opportunity to contribute. But beyond this money was never mentioned. The chaplain's business was to preach and teach, to administer holy sacraments, to give counsel and direction,

to comfort the broken hearted, to offer friendship to those who were lonely and homesick, to lead men to prayer and to pray with them.

Yes! The Armies overseas seemed to me at the time an ideal field for the exercise of the Christian ministry and the parochial life with all its financial problems began to look like a business career or a commercial venture or a more or less sordid proposition!

It is just here therefore that the story of the Wise Men means so much to every one of us, whether of the clergy or the laity. It tells how beautiful, how idealistic the money question may be. A man cannot read the story without feeling instinctively that gifts are an essential part of Christianity. It tells us that the use of money is an index of character, that gifts when laid at the feet of Jesus Christ are worship. In a word, it takes the money question of the Church out of the domain of things mean and sordid and enshrines it among the Church's prayers and sacraments.

And yet I am convinced that the clergy of the Church under present conditions are rapidly "leaving the word of God" for the "serving of tables." (Acts 6:2). I am convinced that the vast financial plans of the Church are gradually, but surely transforming us from prophets, priests and pastors into business men and collectors of revenue. We are not so much to blame for this as the laity. The revenue has to be collected, unless the Church is to retire from the field, but manifestly the clergy are not the ones to collect it. The clergy are now compelled to raise the funds, for otherwise the funds would not be raised.

I am also convinced that this situation has much to do with the shortage of candidates for Holy Orders. Small clerical salaries are not responsible. Young men are still heroic. But it is beginning to dawn on our young men that the only successful clergyman is a man with business and financial talents. Success is no longer a question of prophetic and priestly and pastoral ability. And when he has made up his mind that the ministry is largely a business career, he turns from it, and if he is going into business, he prefers to "take it straight."

It is often said that the clergy are not good business men. The assertion always brings a smile to my face, and I wonder why, if we are not good business men, the business of the Church is so largely left to our endeavours. Even the canons of the Church seem to take for granted that we are incompetent in this direction, and when purely business matters are to be dealt with the clergy are placed in the minority or entirely excluded from the vote! The average clergyman, however, is a better business man than the average layman! Indeed, he has to be. Otherwise the Church would be today financially on the rocks.

It is true, thank God! that the laymen of the Church are taking a greater interest than formerly in the Church's affairs, but not always in the right direction; it is also true that they are shouldering a larger proportion of the Church's burdens than was the case a few years ago, but not always to the best advantage. The clergy are the appointed and anointed prophets, priests and pastors of the Church, and they have a

work to do which laymen cannot do, and the laymen ought to set them free from the Church's financial entanglements for the real work of their ministry. Otherwise their office will be prostituted and their influence nullified, for no man can preach the Gospel convincingly and exercise his priesthood freely and shepherd his flock successfully, who is regarded as a collector of revenue.

We clergy must recognize, however, that giving is an essential part of Christianity, and must teach accordingly, and teach not only by precept, but also by example. The priest who does not give conscientiously to the work of the Church, systematically and proportionately, has no right to ask his people to do so. Precept without example is always folly.

The fact is we must all transfigure the money question of the Church with the star-light of the Epiphany. The Wise Men looked forward with joy to the presentation of their gifts. So would Christ always have us give. "It is blessed to give," He said, "more blessed than to receive." The Epiphany bids us not only to give, but to learn the joy of giving. It is a mistake to let the multiplicity of appeals worry or disturb us. They are the stars leading us to Christ. The parish or the individual who receives few appeals for the Church's work at home and abroad may well feel ashamed of the fact. The Wise Men's gifts were well chosen, and every worshipper of Christ is called upon to give carefully and intelligently. He is also called upon to give systematically, generously, and even heroically. The one who gives in answer to the

Church's appeals, but does not experience the joy of giving, is to be pitied. But the one who gives heroically, and rejoices in his self-denial, has learned the lesson of the Wise Men and is to be accounted one of Christ's blessed ones.

Let us never forget that the Wise Men presented their gifts to Christ! Their gifts stand definitely for Christian giving. The names of the Wise Men (according to the Venerable Bede) were Melchior, Gaspar and Balthasar. They might have given their wealth (for the Magi were astrologers) to erect a tower in the East for "star-gazing," to be known throughout the coming generations as the "Melchior Observatory." Or, they might have endowed a great building for clay-tablets in Ecbatana, to be known for all time as the "Gaspar Library." Or again, they might have laid out a Paradise for wild beasts or Hanging Gardens in some Babylon, in honour of Balthasar! They might have devoted their wealth to such uses as these, but they brought their offerings to Christ, and laid them at His feet.

This is pre-eminently an age of giving, but not definitely of Christian giving. Men who profess and call themselves Christians are giving away millions for almost every conceivable secular purpose, but when it comes to Christ's great commission—"Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel"—the millions are not forth-coming. It was only recently that a Christian gentleman gave seven hundred thousand dollars for an athletic field in one of our great cities. One of our bishops discovered long ago a man who attended